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The thesis consists of non-functional, coil-built ceramics which have to do with a perception of structure in terms of linear movement. The work was presented at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, April 27 through May 11, 1975.

A 35mm color transparency of each work is on file at the Walter C. Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

COIL-BUILT CERAMIC LANDSCAPE

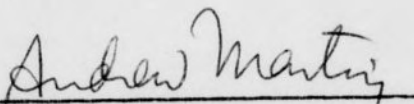
by

Karen Allen Reed

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

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Approved by

  
Thesis Advisor

This thesis has been approved by the following  
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Advisor

Andrew Martin

Committee Members

Pat Gost

Andrew Martin

Paul Gost

Walter Barker

April 15, 1975

Date of Acceptance by Committee

# CATALOGUE

TITLE	MEDIUM	SIZE
1. Spring Landscape	Ceramic	13" diameter
2. Dream Landscape	Ceramic	12" long
3. Island	Ceramic	9" diameter
4. Wetland	Ceramic	8" diameter
5. Tangled Growth	Ceramic	6½" long
6. Landscape with Satyr	Ceramic	11" diameter
7. Long Landscape	Ceramic	15" long
8. Domical Structure I	Ceramic	12" diameter
9. Domical Structure II	Ceramic	10" diameter
10. Temple	Ceramic	13" tall
11. Orchard	Ceramic	8" long
12. Devil Hill	Ceramic	6½" tall
13. Sprouting Form	Ceramic	6" tall
14. Landscape Box 1	Ceramic	6" tall
15. Landscape Box 2	Ceramic	5" wide
16. Landscape Box 3	Ceramic	6" tall
17. Landscape Box 4	Ceramic	7" tall
18. Landscape Box 5	Ceramic	6" tall
19. Landscape Box 6	Ceramic	7" tall

## COIL-BUILT CERAMIC LANDSCAPE

The thesis work evolved from a series of small fantasy-landscapes in clay, in which the hollow, hillocky form was built of coils which twisted, curled, and meandered but at the same time interlocked to form a solid structure. In some of these landscapes small nude figures are embedded, as if in the surface of their dream.

In these earlier pieces I experimented with various ways of relating the structure to the ground plane. The latest of these is included in the thesis group as a transitional piece. It is elongated rather than compact and arches up at the base to allow a flow of space through the center of the form.

The later pieces all develop from a solid, unbroken relationship with the ground plane. The two domical constructions rest on a circular coil of clay, then swell outward slightly before rising and turning inward. Progressively the coils of clay are activated, squeezed into ripples which interlock on the surface. Where they terminate at the mouth of the form the coils are tiny and springy, almost to the point of breaking off into the space of the void.

In the next six works a box, whose proportions approach those of the cube, ultimate symbol of repose and stability, is used as the supporting mechanism for an elaborate network of twisting, snaky coils of clay, which represent branching plant forms. The box exists as a sort of internal base for the sculpture; without it these extensions of the material would be impossible.

The idea of the box enveloped by plant forms occurred to me after extensive viewing of photographs of Italian Renaissance gardens, where the organic and the geometrical exist in an intimate relationship. In the gardens

plants are laid out in elaborate ground patterns, large shrubs are positioned and trimmed to create architectural spaces, and the whole is controlled by perspectival relationships and measured transitions. My boxes represent a somewhat eccentric reaction to Renaissance sensibility.

The vine-boxes are small environments. Here one stands outside the perspectival space-box rather than inside it. I have removed small sections of the boxes; these make note of the interior but do not invite passage. At certain angles of viewing the holes become aligned so that one can look through the opposite side. To me there is something magical here--that sight can penetrate, jump over the void.

The viewer, so aligned, becomes part of the space of the box. The boxes are intended to draw the viewer close, to miniaturize him, in a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland experience.

On the surface of the box a texture of movement is created. Coils twist, reverse, spring, loop, in a wayward calligraphy. As in a Japanese panelled screen, each face presents its own scene; yet these are interconnected by movements across the edge.

This surface movement, at times loose, at times dense and interlocking, should not be described as merely decorative. There have existed decorative traditions which are vitalistic rather than static, which imply the animation of the inanimate, the soul in nature. These traditions, which have produced incredible activations of surface or form, go beyond what the West generally regards as decorative: Chinese ceremonial bronzes, Etruscan bronzes, Islamic tile-work, Celtic manuscript illumination, and Venetian architectural ornamentation. I would hope to relate to these vitalistic decorative traditions.



My sculpture in clay owes much to a background in coil-built pottery, and the ambivalent relationship my pieces have to pots is an essential feature of the work. Like containers, the forms are hollow, with holes revealing an interior; however, they do not suggest utility in any way. The domical pieces distinguish themselves from pots not only because they have no bottom but because they lack the anthropomorphic imagery implicit in most pots. Without foot, belly, shoulder, neck, or lip--they do not imply a figural presence. The structure is free to assume other orientations.

The vine-boxes provide another aspect of container imagery. The outer surface is a ground for the sculptural activity; the inner surface is quiet, negative, inactive. The block of inner space does not flow outward; the interior hardly communicates with the exterior. The box image imposes its own limitations. A more plastic orientation of the whole space would occur only to the degree that the box was destroyed as a conceptual entity.

The pieces in the show are composed of local stoneware clay (North State plastic) with 5% nepheline syenite added to increase fusion at 2300°F., the top temperature available in my electric kiln. 10% blackbird clay was added to the clay body to eliminate the raw yellowish-white look of oxidation-fired clay. With the blackbird the unglazed clay body takes on a grainy, sandy, tan coloration. For most pieces this seemed a satisfactory surface. A few pieces are glazed, however, in semi-mat, neutral, recessive colors of gray, gray-green, or ochre. One unglazed piece represents a different clay body, 50% North State and 50% red Pomona clay.